

## The Clipper Visits The Police Dept.

By PAT BARLOW

### Conclusion

There was a time when Duxbury's police were considered little more than pistol-packing peace-keepers, there to arbitrate neighbors' disputes and disperse noisy crowds of night owls. In those days, the Clipper could count on weekly letters of complaint against police personnel and you couldn't get down the first aisle of the A & P without hearing a barb aimed at the local constabulary.

Consequently, a police study committee was inaugurated at town meeting in 1977 and charged with suggesting improvements, changes and goals for the department, as well as assessing its internal problems. An interim report by the committee (notably, William McBain, Ralph Sarro, Lida Winchell and Will Sheehan) rated the police department "good" in March 1978, and its members, "dedicated professionals." Equipment, facilities, administration and cohesiveness of it all didn't fare so well. They were described with such qualifiers as, "at least adequate" and "in need of development." In the area generally defined as management, the interim report described the department as having "extremely serious problems."

Problem #1 was autocratic administration of the department under which police personnel were compelled to follow command without question. The interim report, unrelenting in its analysis, suggested that since Duxbury was not a war zone, military-style treatment of the rank and file was inappropriate; that rigid and closed-door management of the department was conspicuously antagonistic, inconsistent, unnecessary and unreasonable. Modification of command protocol was called for, particularly in the interest of open and constructive communication between management and labor. The selectmen did not escape criticism for their reluctance or inability to either guide police management or invest it with enough authority to correct its own shortcomings. The report described "divisiveness" within the police department as "scandalous."

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To make a long story short, the police department had evolved over the years into an agency with no clear definition of duties, policies, objectives or expectations. Attempts to correct the situation internally were construed as confrontations of authority and relegated to the collective bargaining table with disastrous results: demoralized personnel and severely diminished motivation for constructive change.

The final report of the police study committee in March 1980 soft-pedaled the findings of the interim report, noting that much improvement had taken place since 1978. It ranked the dedication and caliber of the Duxbury police department as second to none on the South Shore, with confidence it could become "outstanding." (But inadequacies hindering such achievement remain today, as then, considerable. With the exception of conference rooms, the department's security, maintenance, data communications systems, records system, evidence retention system, telecommunications and equipment in general are embarrassingly -- perhaps dangerously -- inefficient.)

The 1980 report went on to say areas of critical need were leadership, esprit de corps and procedures for dealing with complex human problems on community, department and individual levels. Priorities for improvement included the establishment of procedures and standards for hiring; developing an atmosphere of mutual trust between administration and subordinates; the institution of in-service training (still waiting in the wings) and an all-out effort on everyone's part to improve employee relations.

Thus identified and aired, the elements contributing to a discombobulated police department became correctable. The rank and file were vindicated of blame for the agency's chaotic condition; internecine quarrels dissolved; and a unified police coterie applied itself to solving problems and implementing improvements. In the process, morale zoomed. Special aptitudes were discovered and taken into consideration when assigning individuals. It was understood and accepted that some were more adept at handling certain situations than others, and this truth, when recognized, contributed to the department's remarkable versatility.

According to police sergeant Richard Bayramshian, president of Duxbury local 323 of the IBPO, a great deal of growth has taken place in the department in the last 3 years, growth encouraged by the flexible stewardship of the department and a resourceful police union. To the credit of everyone, the in-house effort paid off. Not one grievance has been filed in recent years because conflicts are resolved as they arise, openly and equitably. It also helped that the second floor of the building was converted from dead space to working quarters; that incentives for education were offered; and that there was a show of community support -- though it didn't translate into dollars -- for a police department whose ambition was the attainment of excellence.

That ambition continues to be thwarted by a lingering and naive notion that a small-town police operation is to professional law enforcement what a dalmatian is to a fire station: earning its keep with

cheerful bark-and-manners. Such an attitude is well-reflected in the parsimonious funding of the police department, which was recently patted on the head by town officials for such "conservation" efforts as keeping their budget comfortable for the taxpayers.

So tight is the police budget that the conversion of the department's second floor was done by police personnel. Materials and carpentry costs were paid for by the town, but furnishings and finishing touches came out of police union dues. Similarly, numerous other tasks unrelated to law enforcement are managed in-house, from vehicle maintenance and plumbing to painting and repairs.

Duxbury's police department is so budget-conscious that even stationery supplies, including paperclips, must be requisitioned piecemeal. One is tempted to treat that claim as apocryphal except that the police officers who made it aren't known for exaggerating anything, least of all minor humiliations.

Still, police life in Duxbury is not all fiscal slavery and going without. The 1967 President's Commission on Crime emphasized a national need for better police procedures and the up-grading of personnel; and the Quinn Bill, which treated the subject of job-readiness, promotions, raises, and providing educational incentives, was adopted by Duxbury in 1973. Since then, 12 members of the Duxbury police department have availed themselves of continuing-education programs, including graduate degrees.

In addition, 12 local residents maintain membership in the state-wide 100 Club, a civilian organization whose contributions pay off mortgages, educate children and provide other benefits to the families of service-disabled and deceased police and firemen. Duxbury also has an active and supportive police union which recently joined a 10-town coalition, the Employee Assistance Program. (It functions as a counseling service for police officers and their families affected by job-related stress and behavioral/medical problems.) The local union also contributes generously to Duxbury's charities, station improvements, and sets aside \$500 each for the college-bound offspring of police personnel. The tradition of labor-doing-for-labor is hale and hearty on West St. as much by necessity as choice. If the West St. Blues did not constantly evaluate and supplement their ability to survive operational failings and inadequacies, the department would be a farce.

What motivates such dedication in a town so cynical that its selectmen think a 1% "leap" in the police department budget is enough to meet contemporary needs? (More telling is the selectmen's request that the department stay as close to a zero budget increase as possible. So much for the purchase of such "sophisticated" equipment as a cell-surveillance camera, building-security system and home-alert radios.)

A large part of this dedication comes of pure professionalism. Professionals don't surrender to obstacles, they do the best they can to work around them. If those obstacles compromise the quality of performance, professionals must either live with the frustration or remind one another that the fault is not theirs. Most of the time they do both in our town.

Most of Duxbury's police personnel are also local residents which gives the town and the department advantages not enjoyed by big cities. To begin with, local police personnel know their territory intimately, down to the last nuance and eccentricity. They are unfailingly patient and attentive, hearing out complaints with ears specifically tuned to understanding their community better. This encourages a friendly relationship between residents and police; mutual cooperation and respect; and communications ease. One would have to look far and wide to find these sensitivities in big city law enforcement, where police officers have neither the time nor the opportunity to develop such responsiveness.

Duxbury's police services run a broad gamut and the West St. Blues deserve a chief as capable and experienced in delivering those services as any of his or her subordinates. It is imperative that our police officers have confidence in their leadership and the process through which it is chosen. A search committee, remarkable for its lack of law-enforcement expertise, is not a step in the right direction. Worse, it is an insinuation by its very existence that the best person for the chief's job can't be found on Duxbury's police force.

#### Duxbury Police Department Personnel

Chief Henry McNeil, 62, chief 15 years; officer 35 years; Duxbury Constable; past shellfish warden; past veteran agent; member, Chief of Police Assn; previous vice president, Plymouth County Chief of Police Assn.

Captain Thomas Johnson, 54, police force 30 years; juvenile officer; Sgt.-prosecutor 15 years; Mass. State Police Academy; Duxbury Constable; Plymouth County Police Training School.

Sgt. Dick Bayramshian, 47, police force 17 years; shift commander; past chairman IBPO negotiating team, 1972-78; IBPO president, 1981-present; chairman IBPO scholarship committee; Brockton Police Academy; AB and MA, Brown University; Massachusetts teaching certificate, Eastern Nazarene College; National coordinator, LEAP; vice chairman, IBPO legislative council.

Officer Mike Dormady, 31, police force 11 years; secretary-treasurer IBPO, 1976; past vice president IBPO; Quincy Police Academy; AS, criminal justice, Massasoit College; BS, law enforcement, Northeastern University.

Detective Warren Rydstrom, 37, police force 10

years; past president IBPO; member negotiating team 1980; Quincy Police Academy; AS, criminal justice, Northeastern University; BS, law enforcement, Northeastern University.

Officer Reggie Brilliant, 33, police force 10 years; New Bedford Police Academy.

Officer Bob Byrnes, 52, prosecutor; drug officer; past range officer; motorcycle officer.

Sgt. John Colbert, 38, police force 10 years; shift commander; past investigator; past president and past vice president IBPO; Quincy Police Academy; AS, law enforcement, Massasoit; UMass attendee.

Officer Ernie Coose, 44, police force 8 years, Vale Tech, New Bedford Police Academy.

Officer Thomas Brown, 36, police force 10 years; patrol officer; past president and vice president IBPO; chairman, IBPO negotiating team; Quincy Police Academy; BS, law enforcement, Boston State; MA, criminal justice, Northeastern University.

Officer Bob Fontaine, 36, police force 10 years; past union protocol officer; Brockton Police Academy; Northeastern University.

Officer Curtis Dow, 51, safety officer 13 years; juvenile officer; traffic control officer; Mass. State Police Academy; Brockton Police Academy.

Officer Phil Thayer, 43, Police force 9 years, Quincy Police Academy.

Officer George Bean, 47, police officer 17 years; motorcycle officer; juvenile officer; patrol officer; member IBPO scholarship committee; Brockton Police Academy; Massasoit College attendee.

Officer George Costa, 33, police force 10 years; Barnstable Police Academy; AS, law enforcement, Massasoit College.

Sgt. Ed Cuneo, 44, police force 18 years; past secretary-treasurer IBPO; prosecutor sgt. 12 years; Brockton Police Academy.

Officer Allen Gilbert, 37, motorcycle, patrol officer 13 years; past president and vice president IBPO; member negotiating team 11 years; AS, law enforcement, Massasoit College; BA, law enforcement, Northeastern University; Quincy Police Academy.

Note: Officers Carol Chubb, William Burgoyne and Martin Sinnott have just become regular members of the Duxbury police department and their profiles are not yet on record with the IBPO. All 3 have previous police experience and trained at the Mass. Criminal Justice Training School. In January they will also attend the Barnstable Police Academy. Carol Chubb has a BS in law enforcement and an AS in medical-secretarial sciences, and is a firearms champion. William Burgoyne has a BS in psychology and has worked with the Duxbury police department off and on since 1972. Martin Sinnott has been a special officer since 1978 with previous police experience in Marshfield.

In addition, Sgt. William LaFleur and Sgt. James Wells, both shift commanders and long-time members of the Duxbury police department, were not members of the IBPO at the time this report was written, and their profiles were not available. Both have since joined IBPO.